IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for reforming mechanical characteristics of an Al alloy casting by subjecting the Al alloy casting to the action of temperature and pressure, said method comprising the steps of:

introducing the Al alloy casting into an HIP apparatus capable of withstanding HIP pressure therein,

subjecting said Al alloy casting to a high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment in the HIP apparatus,

reducing the pressure in the HIP apparatus while maintaining the temperature of the thus-treated Al alloy casting in the HIP apparatus at about the same temperature as the temperature of the high temperature/high pressure treatment, and

subsequently carrying out solution treatment, quenching, and aging in this order.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein, prior to said high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment, the Al alloy casting is preheated to a temperature near said high temperature and then said high temperature/high pressure treatment is performed in the HIP apparatus under the application of pressure.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein a heat insulating structure is provided, said Al alloy casting is accommodated in the interior of said heat insulating structure and is then introduced in the HIP apparatus and subjected in this state to said high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment and said solution treatment.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said Al alloy casting is covered with a heat-resistant porous heat insulator and is then introduced in the HIP apparatus and subjected in this state to said high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment and said solution treatment.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) A method for reforming mechanical characteristics of an Al alloy casting by subjecting the Al alloy casting to the action of temperature and pressure, said method comprising the steps of:

introducing the Al alloy casting into an HIP apparatus capable of withstanding HIP pressure therein,

subjecting said Al alloy casting to a high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment in the HIP apparatus,

reducing the pressure in the HIP apparatus while simultaneously introducing heat to maintain the temperature of the thus-treated Al alloy casting in the HIP apparatus substantially unchanged, and

subsequently carrying out solution treatment, quenching, and aging in this order.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein, prior to said high temperature/high pressure HIP treatment, the Al alloy casting is preheated to a temperature near said high temperature and then said high temperature/high pressure treatment is performed in the HIP apparatus under the application of pressure.